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Ayodhyā. Pt. 1: The History of Ayodhyā from the 7th Century B. C. to the Middle of the 18th Century. Pt. 2: Ayodhyāmāhātmya: Introduction, Edition, and Annotation. Pt. 3: Appendices, Concordances, Bibliography, Indexes, and Maps . Hans Bakker

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Review

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character. Simon Magus would claim to being such a prophet, “God’s agent sent for the salvation of mankind. His appearance was necessary because the angels who had created the world subsequently had turned against God and brought the world to the brink of destruction through their bad government” (p. 337).

The materials discussed in this book are extremely rich. Statements are put forward very cautiously, which is a sign of cleverness, but which might present a difficult exercise for less experienced readers. [IOAN PETRU CULIANU, *University of Groningen*]

Ayodhyā. Pt. 1: The History of Ayodhyā from the 7th century B.C. to the Middle of the 18th Century. Pt. 2: Ayodhyāmāhātmya: Introduction, Edition, and Annotation. Pt. 3: Appendices, Concordances, Bibliography, Indexes, and Maps. By HANS BAKKER. Groningen Oriental Series, vol. 1. Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1986. Pp. 181; 471; 119, 4 maps.

This is a fine piece of scholarship, containing a historicoreligious description of the pilgrimage center of Ayodhyā and an edition of the *Ayodhyāmāhātmya* according to ten manuscripts (of which four are newly discovered), with commentaries, indexes, an impressive bibliography, and accurate maps.

Ancient Sanskrit epics describe the mythical town of Ayodhyā, but they never mention Sāketa, which was, from the sixth century B.C. on, an important center of northern India, known by geographers and tradesmen. Moreover, Sāketa happened to be situated on the same spot as the actual Ayodhyā, at least as early as the sixth century, when the royal court of the Guptas moved there. This implies that at some time an identification took place between Ayodhyā, seat of Prince Rāma, and the town of Sāketa. Rāmaite temples were installed in Ayodhyā from the twelfth century on. The cult of (the name of) Rāma grew there between the thirteenth and the sixteenth centuries. A Rāmaite theology was elaborated along orthodox vedantic lines in the fifteenth century.

The process by which, in the sixteenth century, Ayodhyā developed into a sacred city is very curious. First of all, newly discovered ancient holy sites are identified by pious Hinduists as being the place where Rāma used to brush his teeth or where he created a pleasure grove for Sītā (pt. 1, p. 136). By the same time Ayodhyā had become a flourishing pilgrimage center. To Rāma devotees several actual sites could be shown whose names were borrowed from those of sites of the mythical town. “Once a start was made with the rediscovery of the ancient places of the Tretāyuga this paradigm could in principle be employed without limit, and the present situation in Ayodhyā bears witness to its prolificacy. The rediscovery was guided by the conception of a celestial city of Ayodhyā that is forever established in Viṣṇu’s heaven, and of which the terrestrial town is thought to be a replica. . . . The rediscovery of the ancient places of the Tretāyuga had not only become a means of recovering the glorious past, but simultaneously provided devotees with a true reflection of the eternal paradise of Rāma” (pt. 1, pp. 143–44).

Hans Bakker, who has spent long years in field investigations of northern Indian pilgrimage routes, gives us in this thorough work a glimpse into a process of “mythologization” of actual data that is probably not unique in history but certainly thus far is only poorly known. [IOAN PETRU CULIANU, *University of Groningen*]

Pūṣan and Sarasvatī. By JAN GONDA. Amsterdam, Oxford, and New York: North-Holland Publishing Co., 1985. Pp. 175.

In his characteristically exacting and thorough manner, Jan Gonda here undertakes three projects: to trace and explain the Vedic goddess Sarasvatī's transformation from a river deity to the goddess of creative poetic and musical eloquence; to discern the central features of the Vedic god Pūṣan, whose history and function Gonda maintains have been misunderstood by many scholars; and to understand why Vedic literatures tend to present Sarasvatī and Pūṣan as a complementary divine pair. His key mode of entry into these endeavors is to establish the many associations and identifications that the two deities have with other personalities in the Āryan ritual and mythic pantheon and to derive, thereby, their meaning to the composers of the Vedic literary corpus.

Gonda feels that Sarasvatī was originally a local mother goddess for those Vedic families reclaiming the lands along northwest India's rivers. As the river, she was the source of life and sustenance and, thus, the provider of prosperity. As such, she was the local object of propitiation hymns (*āprīs*) sung during various rites, particularly those at the important new and full moon ceremonies. Gonda argues that as Sarasvatī's fame spread beyond the river lands she was associated with Iḍā (or Iḷā) and Bhāratī, two other goddesses praised in Vedic *āprī* hymns. These three were then associated with the three most important aspects of the Vedic ritual. Iḍā was representative of the sacral offerings and Bhāratī of various priestly actions. Sarasvatī herself was at first not specialized—but as Gonda points out, the ritual itself could not function without use of the sacred songs and other mantras, and Sarasvatī, the complementary third in the divine triad, came to be associated with the spoken word. In this function she shared the domain of the important goddess Vāc (Word, Sacred Language), and Sarasvatī came to be inextricably identified with Vāc herself. As Sarasvatī-Vāc, she was the source of every Vedic prayer, creative poem, generative song, or inspired thought (*dhī*). Gonda's reader infers that it is in this role, in part, that Sarasvatī later became the divine patron of the creative arts.

Gonda points out that, as the source of prosperity, Sarasvatī was also associated with the cow and notes that Vedic ritualists saw in this connection a similarity with the role played by the god, Pūṣan. Noting that Vedic texts say that Pūṣan brings generative power, fecundity, prosperity, and nourishment (*puṣṭi*) and isolating passages that actually identify Pūṣan with cattle, Gonda argues that Pūṣan represents to his Vedic worshipers “all well-being that depends on successful agriculture and cattle-breeding” (p. 95). He parts